

future: revise the basics: will, going to or present progressive?

future in the present We generally use **present** forms (present progressive or *am/are/is going to*) when we can **see the future in the present**: we already see things coming or starting. We prefer *will* (the most common form) when we are simply giving information about the future, with no special reason for using present forms. Compare:

- *I'm seeing Janet on Tuesday.* (the arrangement exists now.)
I wonder if she'll recognise me. (not talking about the present)
- *We're going to get a new car.* (The decision already exists.)
I hope it will be better than the old one. (not talking about the present)

plans *Be going to* and the **present progressive** can both be used to talk about plans. We use the **present progressive** mostly when the **time** and/or **place** are **fixed**. Compare:

I'm going to take a holiday some time soon. *Joe's spending next week in France.*
Emma's going to study biology. *Phil's starting work on Monday.*

1 Rewrite the sentences, putting in expressions from the box and using the present progressive. (Different answers are possible.)

for tomorrow's concert from March 1st next month next week
next year on Saturday on Tuesday this evening tomorrow morning

▶ I'm going to play tennis with Andy.
I'm playing tennis with Andy on Saturday.

1 We're going to see Sarah.

2 I'm going to start fencing lessons.

3 We're going to meet the accountants.

4 I'm going to get the car serviced.

5 They're going to close the road for repairs.

6 Everybody's going to get a free ticket.

7 The air traffic controllers are going to strike.

8 All the train companies are going to put their prices up.

decisions We prefer *be going to* and the **present progressive** for decisions and plans (see above) that exist **in the present** – they have already been made. We prefer *will* to announce decisions **as we make them**. Compare:

'We've got a lot of bills to pay.' *I know. I'm going to do them all on Monday.'*
'The plumber's bill has just come in.' *'OK, I'll pay it.'*

2 Put in I'll or I'm going to.

- ▶ I've decided. I'm going to take a week off.
- 1 'Is Alice coming round?' 'Wait a minute. phone and ask her.'
 - 2 'I've left my money at home.' 'Again? OK. pay.'
 - 3 'Do you want to go for a walk?' 'No, get some work done.'
 - 4 'I've got a headache.' '..... get you an aspirin.'
 - 5 sell this car – it's giving me nothing but trouble.
 - 6 Can you answer the phone if it rings? have a shower.
 - 7 change my job soon.
 - 8 'There's the doorbell.' '..... go.'

predictions: what we expect We prefer **going to** when we can already see the future in the present: we can see things coming or starting, or they are already **planned**. We prefer **will** to say what we **think or believe** about the future. Compare:

Careful! The meat's **going to burn**. (I can see it now.)

Don't ask Pete to cook the steak – he'll **burn** it. (I'm sure, because I know him.)

We don't use the present progressive to predict events which are outside our control.

It's **going to rain** soon. BUT NOT ~~It's raining~~ soon.

3 Circle the best form.

- ▶ Claire (is going to) / will have a baby.
- 1 Perhaps I'm going to / I'll see you at the weekend.
 - 2 Look at the sky: it's going to / it will snow.
 - 3 Look out – we're going to / we'll hit that car!
 - 4 Ask John – he's probably going to / he'll probably know the answer.
 - 5 You'd better put a coat on, or you're going to / you'll get cold.
 - 6 If you press this key, the computer is going to / will shut down.
 - 7 You can see from Barbara's face that there's going to / there'll be trouble.
 - 8 It's no use telling Andy about your problems; he's going to / he'll tell everybody else.

simple present We sometimes use the **simple present** to talk about the future; for instance when we talk about **timetables**, routines and schedules.

The meeting **starts** at ten o'clock. What time **does** the train **arrive** in Paris?

My plane **leaves** from Heathrow.

We can also use the **simple present** to give and ask for **instructions**.

'Where **do** I **get** an application form?' 'You **go** to the main office on the second floor.'

In other cases we **don't** use the **simple present** in simple sentences to talk about the **future**.

Emma's **coming** round later. (NOT ~~Emma comes~~ ...) I'll **write** – I promise.

There's the phone. I'll **answer** it. (NOT ... ~~answer~~.)

For the simple present with a future meaning after *if, when* etc, see pages 204 and 232.

4 Choose the best tense.

- ▶ The film (ends) / will end at midnight.
- ▶ I phone / (will phone) you soon.
- 1 I start / will start dieting after Christmas.
 - 2 Rob comes / is coming round after 7.00.
 - 3 Do you / Will you post my letters?
 - 4 I have / will have a French class at 9.00 tomorrow.
 - 5 The train isn't direct – you change / will change at Manchester.
 - 6 My final exam is / will be in May.
 - 7 What time does / will the concert start?
 - 8 I play / am playing hockey tomorrow.

more about the present progressive, *going to* and *will*

spoken and written English *Be going to* and the **present progressive** are particularly common in **spoken** English, as ways of talking about the future. This is because conversation is often about future events that we can **see coming**, so present forms are natural. In written English, these forms are less often used. **Will** is extremely common in **writing**, because written language tends to deal with less immediate future events, when we do not see the future in the present. **Will** is also preferred when giving information about **impersonal**, fixed arrangements – for example official itineraries. Compare:

We're meeting Sandra at 6.00.

The President will arrive at the airport at 14.00. He will meet ...

pronunciation of *going to*. In informal speech, *going to* is often pronounced as /gʌnə/. This is often shown in writing as *gonna*.

1 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the letters of the boxed expressions into the text.

A it will be B there will be C will be introduced D will be presented
E will be welcomed F will cast off G will cover H will play I you will be

On a wildlife cruise with Wildlife Worldwide, ^{1...} on a small vessel (the vessels we work with generally accommodate between 20 and 128 passengers), just enough to be able to meet new people and get to know them over the course of the trip, and to be able to recognise and greet all of the other passengers onboard. Not so many that every time you see a face ^{2...} be a new one!

On a wildlife cruise the vessels have been specially adapted and refitted to accommodate guests, since many of them were actually research vessels in a former life. On a wildlife cruise, ^{3...} illustrated talks

and presentations throughout the journey. These ^{4...} a whole range of topics from birds and mammals, to geography, history and astronomy, and they ^{5...} by the onboard guides and experts who ^{6...} such an important role in making your trip a special one.

To begin with you ^{7...} aboard with a glass of champagne and a bite to eat. The crew ^{8...} the boat, and once you are under way you ^{9...} to the captain and his crew. Departures are generally late afternoon/early evening. Passengers are free to visit the ship's bridge any time of the day or night.

It is fascinating seeing how the ship's course is plotted, and to observe the monitors of depth, wind speed and wave height! (Adapted from *Oceans Worldwide website*.)



2 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the letters of the boxed expressions into the text.

A going to be happy B going to be there C going to see D It's going to be
E there are going to be F we're catching G we're leaving

Well, ^{1...} tomorrow, Sandra. ^{2...} amazing! It's quite a small boat – about 50 passengers, so we'll soon get to know everybody. And ^{3...} half a dozen experts on this and that giving lectures in the evenings, and going ashore with us and answering our stupid questions when we land. Tony Soper's ^{4...}, believe it or not, so the bird-watchers are ^{5...} ! And there's a terrific woman called Ingrid Visser who's red-hot on killer whales. I can't remember the others, but I know there's a marine mammal expert, and an astronomer. And we're definitely ^{6...} whales – lots and lots of whales, they've promised! Can't wait!

Well, must go and pack – ^{7...} a very early flight. Looking forward to seeing you in July. Prepare yourselves for a long photo evening!

Love from both to both

Jane

shall and will In modern English *I/we will* and *I/we shall* can generally be used with no difference of meaning. *Will* is more common, and *shall* is dying out. (In any case, the commonest forms in speech are the contractions *I'll* and *we'll*.)

shall in questions In older English, *shall* was used to talk about **obligation** (rather like *should*). This meaning still survives in **first-person questions**, where *shall* is used to **ask for instructions or suggestions, or offer services**.

What time **shall we** come round? **Shall I** take your coat?

Compare the use of *will* to ask for information:

What time **will we** get into London?

legal language Legal documents, such as contracts, often use *shall* to express obligation.

The hirer **shall be** responsible for maintenance of the vehicle. (from a car-hire contract)

3 Put in *shall* or *will*.

- 1 Where we go on holiday this year?
- 2 Where I be this time next year?
- 3 Sending out the invitations be Jim's responsibility.
- 4 The tenant be wholly responsible for all decoration and repairs.
- 5 I put the kettle on?
- 6 What time I need to be at the airport?
- 7 What I cook for supper?
- 8 How soon we hear about the application?

The Hirer shall, during the period of the hiring, be responsible for: supervision of the premises, the fabric and the contents; their care, safety from damage however slight or change of any sort; and the behaviour of all persons using the premises whatever their capacity, including proper supervision of car parking arrangements. The Hirer shall make good or pay for all damage (including accidental damage) to the premises or to the fixtures, fittings or contents and for loss of contents. The Hirer shall not use the premises for any purpose other than that described in the Hiring Agreement and shall not allow the premises to be used for any unlawful purpose or in any unlawful way nor

For other (non-future) uses of *will*, see pages 65 and 72.

NOTES

different forms possible The differences between the three main structures used to talk about the future are not always very clear-cut. *Will* and present forms (especially *going to*) are often both possible in the same situation, when 'present' ideas like intention or fixed arrangement are a part of the meaning but not very important. The choice of structure will depend on which part of the meaning we want to emphasise. In the following examples all of the different forms would be correct, with no important difference of meaning.

- *What will you do next year?*
What are you doing next year?
What are you going to do next year?
- *All the family will be there.*
All the family are going to be there.
- *If your mother comes, you'll have to help with the cooking.*
If your mother comes, you're going to have to help with the cooking.
- *You won't believe this.*
You're not going to believe this.